

**Including all workers?**  
**- Strategies of participation and representation in Danish trade unions**

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#### **Introduction**

Since the late 1990's I have been interested in gender equality policies in the Danish labour movement (Hansen 2004a, b, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010a, forthcoming). During that period of time focus has changed from mainly gender equality to a focus on gender and ethnicity and in some trade unions also sexuality and age. Moreover, labour migration has increased and forced trade unions to rethink strategies of organising and representation (Hansen 2010b). In the autumn 2010 the trade union 3F decided an agreement on diversity representation which is going to replace their agreement on fair representation on the basis of gender.

My research in gender equality policies in the labour movement has led me to take a more fundamental discussion of the objectives, the strategies and the tools of gender equality policies in trade unions. This discussion has both normative and analytic dimensions and builds on both theoretical reflections and empirical analyses.

In this paper I will discuss how the Danish trade unions respond to the increasing diversity among the membership and other workers. The discussion builds on two cases: 3F's Agreement on Diversity and the challenges and struggles when putting this into praxis, *and* the strategies of solidarity and interest representation of global domestic workers in three different organizational settings. The basis of the paper is a critical discussion of how to theorize and practice gender equality and diversity policies. This results in a proposal to change the objective from gender equality to parity in participation, to construct participation policies and to make concrete measures and tools sensitive to complex identities, multiple relations of power and the exchange of many work- and life experiences.

#### **The research**

- **Sources for the development of the participation policy perspective**
  1. Research for my Ph.D. on gender equality policies in the Danish Confederation of trade unions, the LO and the British trade union, UNISON (2000-2004)
    - Interviews with 5 Starlets (TU members and junior leaders)
    - Interviews with 7 women leaders (GE-officers, educators and senior leaders)
    - Participant observation
    - More than 60 documents (booklets, statistics, articles, policy papers and so on)
    - Interviews with 6 women leaders hereof 4 from UNISON
    - The report 'Women in UNISON' by Colgan & Ledwith
  2. Research in gender equality and fair representation in 3F (2005-2007)

- Interviews with seven senior leaders who all took part in the negotiation of the merger between KAD and SiD and the Agreement on Fair Representation
  - Survey including all local board members (response percentage 42)
  - Fieldwork in five local branches (participant observation and interviews)
  - Document studies (e.g. gender based statistics and working plan for GE-committees)
  - One focus group
- **Sources for Case II on interest representation of Global Domestic Workers (2009-2010)**
    - Interview, one FOA leader in the national office, October 22, 2009
    - Interview, LO officers, October 22, 2009
    - Interview, two 3F local branch leaders, November 10, 2009
    - Hansen, Jens A. & Nana W. Hansen 2009. *Polonia i København. Et studie af polske arbejdsmigranternes løn-, arbejds- og levevilkår i Storkøbenhavn*. LO-Dokumentation nr.1
    - Kjær, Jakob S. 2010a. 'Hver tiende dansker køber sort rengøring'. *Politiken* 21.07.2010
    - Kjær, Jakob S. 2010b. 'Omfattende svindel i rengøringsbranchen'. *Politiken* 25.07.2010
    - Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandrere & Integration 2010. *Tal & fakta på udlændinge området 2007 & 2009*, [www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/Statistik/SearchStatistics.htm?searchtype=statistics](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk/Statistik/SearchStatistics.htm?searchtype=statistics)
    - Stenum, Helle 2008. *Au pair i Danmark: Billig arbejdskraft eller kulturel udveksling*. FOA, København
    - UWT 2008. *Denmark, Country Report*. Undocumented Workers Transitions, EU Sixth Framework Programme. [www.undocumentedmigrants.eu](http://www.undocumentedmigrants.eu)
  - **Sources for Case I on Diversity Democracy in 3F (2012)**
    - Interview med forbundssekretær, Claus Jørgensen, 8. februar 2012
    - Interview med næstformand Jane Korczak, 1. februar 2012
    - Aftale om mangfoldighed, 3F's kongres 2010
    - Debatoplæg om 3F i fremtiden, Fagligt Fælles Forbund 2011
    - Fagligt og Politisk Grundlag 2010-2013, Fagligt Fælles Forbund 2010
    - Trivsel for alle. Om mangfoldighed i det lokale arbejde. Et mangfoldighedsperspektiv på arbejdspladsen. 3F Ligestilling & Mangfoldighed 2011

### **From gender equality to parity in participation**

From 1999 to 2004 I conducted a study about gender equality policies problems and solutions in the Danish confederation, the LO and in the British trade union, UNISON (Hansen 2004a).<sup>1</sup> I focused in particular on a new gender equality initiative the Starlet Programme which was meant to be both leadership training with a gender perspective and to form the basis for horizontal (among the Starlets) and vertical (with leaders in more senior positions) network building. The programme was directed to younger women either with an interest in becoming trade union leaders or in junior leadership positions. The research revealed a lot of problems both of a fundamental character and in the actual practices in the LO; some of these has also been pointed at by previous (international) research, others were new in the sense that they appeared from the combination of my approach (combining discourse analysis and critical theory) and the Danish context (please see Hansen

2004a, b). In particular four problems or dilemmas bothered me. First, how the GE-policy by focusing on women at the same time reproduces them as the 'organizational others'; second, that the leadership practices appear as the normative basis for the GE-policies although these are clearly gendered practices; third, that the GE-problem representation is simplified in the GE-policies which results in a (partly) reproduction of gender inequalities; and fourth, on the one hand to create equal value and recognition of the female, and on the other not to reproduce Woman and the female as one. These problems made me start my rethinking of the objectives, the strategies and the tools of gender equality policies and for that I reached out for help from Nancy Fraser and her theory of justice (e.g. Fraser 2003).

### **Parity in participation in trade unions**

With inspiration from Fraser's theory of justice I have changed gender equality as the policy objective to parity in participation and renamed gender equality policies to participation policies. Yet, this is not a true copy of Fraser's perspective but developed on the background of trade union democracy, organisation, cultures, values and power resources. Here in particular my research in gender equality policies in the LO and the research in fair representation and gender equality in 3F.

#### ***Parity in participation***

Parity in participation does not only mean equality in representation, but to be able to take part in all parts of society and in social life on equal footing e.g. in the work-place, in the family, and in trade unions. To achieve parity in participation recognition, redistribution and representation are needed. Parity of participation helps to overcome several policy problems. First, it does not build on two-genders and focus is not on women (single identities), but on changing value patterns, structures of distribution, and democracy procedures formal as informal. Not only are women no longer 'the others', but also other marginalised groups (e.g. ethnic minorities) benefit from this new objective; and in addition it is possible to withhold complex identities and multiple intersecting experiences with marginalisation in work, family and trade unions. I suggest that we differentiate the objective of parity in participation in trade unions. On the fundamental level parity in participation is kept more or less untouched; on a general yet context-dependent level it is about making participation, equal social status, reflexive democracy procedures, and a pluralistic community. On a local context-dependent level two actions are needed: first, on the basis of an analysis of the inequality creating processes to identify the problems; *and*, then through mutual learning processes to formulate the local objectives and strategies. Mutual learning processes are created in policy committees in which both marginal members and leaders (e.g. women and ethnic minorities) and the mainstream members and leaders mainly white men take part, exchange experiences and in a dialogue based on mutual respect develop new trade union practices.

#### ***Participation policies***

Fraser separates between two forms of radical strategies of which the transformative is the only one that will lead to parity in participation. A transformative strategy in trade unions will be directed to changing institutionalised value patterns e.g. that a good trade union leader is a man, to changing democracy procedures e.g. that who is going to be the next chair is decided in closed networks at the nearest pub, and to changing the distribution of material resources e.g. so that all groups get support for their works and have means to communicate with the whole union.

Although transformative strategies are preferable my research shows that multiple tools have to be used this includes gender quotas, self-organisation and leadership training. Yet, my research also shows that making participation is a very important part. This is about making meetings more

inclusive, formulating values for the local board based on many experiences, sharing leadership and building collective leaderships, changing practices for the annual general meeting so that all will have a say, establishing dialogical leadership practices and so on.

### ***Organic strategies***

As already indicated Fraser is not my only source of inspiration, also post-structuralism has formed my rethinking and one of the issues I want to bring with me here is the idea of destabilization: that making change and transformation is an organic process. This means that policies and strategies have to be constantly moving. My research shows that even transformative strategies produced new problems and dilemmas. Instead of seeing this as an error, it needs to be included in the strategies. Strategies will lay out objectives and choose tools and then identify problems and dilemmas caused by these, and then lay out new objectives and tools and so on.

## **The Love Perspective & Participation Policies**

Just like when I used Fraser to rethink gender equality objectives, policies and strategies in trade unions, the idea of a love perspective is developed in an interaction between theoretical rethinking and empirical analysis. Mine and Scheuers' evaluation of the Agreement on Fair Representation resulted in two reports for the trade union (Hansen 2007, Hansen & Scheuer 2006). In the second report, which focused on recommendations, I developed three metaphors: the wall, the heart and the flower. The wall symbolized all the barriers to gender equality and fair representation and the flower the manifold measures and tools needed to achieve gender equality and fair representation. But what is interesting here is the heart. During my fieldwork in five local branches I had observed many 'love-actions'; these included good fellowship, mutual respect, openness, trust, the inclusion of the 'diverse, and solidarity. I did also observe pride of ones gender, exchange of gendered experiences and discussions about men's gender equality problems. I saw these actions both as an important vehicle in achieving gender equality and fair representation *and* as an entrance to reconsider how to conceptualize gender and gender equality. So love is a metaphor for perceptions and actions that contribute to the making of 'parity in participation' in trade unions.

The main figure in a love perspective is the meeting of woman and man and the possibilities of through dialogue (exchange) to create emancipation. In this dialogue the man is to be given his gender which will lead to the emancipation of both: the woman will be liberated from being the only gender, and the man from being genderless. The dialogue is also meant to break down gendered stereotypes and to make room for many different life experiences which sometimes are about gender, sometimes intersecting with gender, and sometimes besides and beyond gender. In this perspective gender also becomes a joy and a creative maker; it becomes something we want to do, yet, still struggling with the cultural and historical positions we are offered.<sup>ii</sup>

A love perspective makes it possible to revise gender political strategies so they focus on making room for a diversity of life experiences, include men's emancipation, and emphasize the importance of taking part in a 'curious dialogue'. And last, but not least, it shifts the approach to see gender as possibilities and joy, not only as marginalisation and burdens. To be able to transfer the love perspective to gender politics in trade unions we have to add an institutional level and to take into account the specific context, the trade union. The dialogue or the exchange as I prefer to call it, because we need to go beyond the social interaction of two individuals, takes place in a context where meanings of gender are produced in leadership practices, in the work organisation and the hierarchy, in democracy structures and processes, in the meeting culture, in the distribution of resources, in interest representation, and in values and policies. Consequently, it is clear that gender equality in trade unions is not (only) achieved through a dialogue between two individuals, but

demands institutional changes and collective agency. On the other hand, the love perspective, just as post-structuralism, goes further than just 'gender equality'. Refusing both emancipation (the love perspective) and the dissolution of genders (post-structuralism) as a replacement for gender equality I again rely on parity in participation and to participation policies. Now these have to include love actions. For example can exchange can be one way to change value patterns so they support equality in status/social standing. But to be able to do that a dialogical approach in social interaction resting on mutual respect is needed and moreover, institutional procedures and structures have to support the exchange. Institutional procedures and structures are so to say both the basis for and the result of the exchange. It is important to be aware that the exchange is going on in a specific context that is the result of both central (e.g. bargaining system, national office) and local (branch, workplace) conditions and possibilities and furthermore experiences outside the trade union (e.g. family or the welfare state). This creates different - individual as collective - possibilities for action and for making 'parity in participation'. So love-actions are needed but in some context more difficult to achieve than in others.

It was obvious that in the three branches in which the daily practices included some sort of exchange and other 'love-actions' parity in participation was within reach; and even more so in the one branch which had also changed democracy structures and organizational practices in the direction of participation policies. Yet, it was also clear that in the two remaining branches, in which women were in the majority among the membership and in which they had almost reached proportionality in leadership, and in which there were very little or no exchange but on the contrary lots of conflicts parity in participation was not in sight and gender equality in a much narrower sense was in one branch not on the agenda and in the other mostly on the paper.

### **Diversity Democracy – step one**

Diversity democracy (DD) is the third and most recent part of my rethinking of (gender) equality strategies in trade unions. It is therefore less developed and in particular needs to be confronted with the trade union reality in depth. It has partly evolved from discussions about the new agreement in 3F. With me from the earlier parts I have 'parity in participation' as the fundamental objective and the trinity of recognition and parity in social status, equal distribution of resources, and fair representation as the general conditions needed to achieve the general objective. I also have participation policies which are my translation of Fraser's transformative and via media strategies into a trade union context, and which require multiple measures and tools. And finally, I have the exchange and the room for many life experiences.

The outlining of the three fundamental parts and the challenges discussed below will in this paper serve the purpose of establishing a framework to discuss and partly evaluate the Agreement on Diversity and the conversion of this into policy strategies, tools and changes in 3F. On the longer run the research in 3F is also meant to, like in the previous parts of my rethinking, to reflect back on the theoretical framework and the strategy guidelines.

### **Three fundamental parts in a diversity democracy**

Firstly, diversity democracy (DD) is about making a basis for the inclusion of all members and potential members. Inclusion means both to be represented and to participate *and* to be able recognize oneself and ones own problems in trade union policies, interests and leaders. Inclusion means also to recognize differences among members both in identity and in working and living conditions and to create mutual respect among all; this includes making room for the exchange of many life experiences. It is important to be aware that gender is a basic principle of segregation and valuation in the labour market, in trade unions and in families; and that gendered stereotypes

influence perceptions and actions in ways that limit both (all) genders although gender power hierarchies in general privilege the masculine. Yet, DD marks a change from former policies by insisting on the intersection between different systems of differentiation and how advantages and privileges *and* disadvantages and subordination cut through these systems. Much research from an intersectionality perspective focuses on the constitution of identities, but in a DD focus will be on the political level or with Crenshaw's term, political intersectionality (Crenshaw 1994). Nevertheless, and as said above, individual (and collective) experiences are still important, partly as a fruitful base for making 'good' policies (see also Crenshaw), and partly because these shape members and leaders agency. Fortunately, participation policies already offer a safe ground for making a DD. The core of these is to secure 'parity in participation' by changing patterns, procedures and structures and by focusing on institutionalized processes.

So secondly, diversity democracy requires changes in organisational structures and cultures, in democratic procedures and processes and in the policy and interest agenda. DD is not only about social interaction among members and leaders, nor only about empowering women, ethnic minorities, young people, and LGTB-persons, it is about changing institutional procedures, patterns and processes. Yet, lessons learned from my previous research are that participation policies have to include a wide range of measures and tools.

Thirdly, diversity democracy is about building common ground and social ties among all members and leaders. It is about solidarity and workers' collective. This is important because in a neo-capitalist global labour market a strong workers' collective is necessary to attend to workers' interests and to protect their rights; borders do not only exclude they do also protect. Yet, the common ground, the solidarity, the collective has to build on plurality; and to work in ways that create strong social ties *and* at the same time give room to complex identities and to interest representation based on many experiences. In a way this is what Yuval-Davies (2006), who is the other prominent intersectionality researcher, speaks about when she introduces the concept of transversal policies; to her this is, however, mostly about making policies that will reflect the complex identities of the individual, here: trade union member/worker. Yet, dialogue between different standpoints is an important part of transversal policies, too (Squires 2010). This corresponds well to my ideas about mutual learning processes as the basis for policy making and democracy and about action communities. And to Briskin's 'unity in diversity', *'Taking account of differences in power and experience does not create divisions among union members; rather, it acknowledges existing differences. In so doing, the unions build equality in practice, and increase the potential for a transformed, inclusive and activist union which moves beyond 'defensive' solidarity'* (Briskin 1999:551). In order to address problems of diversity and competition, it will not be sufficient to call for solidarity abstractly or to seek a common denominator like class: to create solidarity and to strengthen trade unions it is necessary to address discrimination based not only on gender, but also on race, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, age, and sexuality. And this should be done both inside the labour movement and in the labour market (Briskin 2002:31). Briskin is concerned with the making of inclusive trade union structures which both give women a political base *and* do not lead to separatism. Moreover she discusses coalition-building both among women across trade unions, women's movement, community organising *and* across different equity seeking groups (e.g. women, ethnic minorities, gays & lesbians) within trade unions. In globalization coalition-building must expand both nationally and transnationally in order to be able to make resistance. To return to my idea of 'action communities', which in a way corresponds to Dean's concept of non-identity coalitions, the inspiration comes from Young's discussion of seriality and women as a social collective (Young 1995). In opposition to theories that presuppose a community building on a common identity as the foundation for action and change (e.g. Colgan & Ledwith 2002), I see collective action as the foundation for making community and solidarity. Workers are brought

together through a common feeling of injustice that arises from concrete situations of exclusion, disrespect and maldistribution at the labour market, in trade unions and in society in general. Community is created when collective action is directed against those actions that placed the workers in a common situation of injustice. This community is a liquid community that crosses gender, sex, ethnicities, education, jobs, union positions and interests. However, it could also be the basis for a more permanent 'action solidarity': that through taking part in different action communities you will extend your care, trust and feelings to a wider range of fellow workers/union members; you will through practice be able to extend reflective solidarity to include the 'stranger'; and you will regard the likeness to other workers instead of just the differences. Yet, someone has to pick up the feeling/experience of injustice, to facilitate dialogue, and to support action. It requires good leadership (Colgan & Ledwith 2002, Kelly 1998), and furthermore, it is important to have some kind of superstructure in trade unions which will support this.

### **Challenges when making diversity democracy a reality in trade unions<sup>iii</sup>**

- Gender equality is forgotten or becomes secondary
- Organisational structures and cultures slow down changes; direct and indirect resistance
- Only changing individuals nor the organization nor the democracy
- Risk of reproducing and reinforcing stereotypes and making new ones
- To think beyond single identities, to reflect the complexity of identities and multiple power relations; to make this into democratic praxis;
- To make transversal policies a reality; to make policies on experiences of inequality
- The risk of forgetting common ground
- That white working class men experience a loss of power and identity
- Absence of knowledge among leaders about gender and diversity in trade unions and in the labour market
- Unequal distribution of power in leadership; and power struggles among leaders
- Too much work, too many tasks
- Absence of interest and commitment in DD; absence of DD leadership; few change agents with little formal and informal power
- Conflicts between changing practices in one part of the organization and no change in other parts
- Problems for new groups in getting real influence/influence on interest representation and policy making; too little focus on making a broad interest and policy agenda

### **Case I: Diversity Democracy in 3F**

At the congress in the autumn 2010, 3F made an Agreement on Diversity. The main argument for this new agreement was that although the FR-agreement, which is running out in 2012, has had an influence on the organization it was necessary to have a new agreement to keep representativeness in relation to gender, age and ethnicity on the policy agenda. The Diversity Agreement was developed together with a few male leaders and local branches and in the Gender Equality & Diversity committee and 'negotiated line for line'. In spite of that, Jane Korczak, who is one of two vice-presidents in 3F, and the president Poul Erik Skov Christensen were concerned that the proposal would create a huge debate which could result in the motion to fall. So they prepared a little sketch in which Jane Korczak motivated the proposal and responded to Poul Erik Skov

Christensen who asked all the ‘naughty’ questions; they ended the sketch with their mutual support to the motion. The result was a support from the congress expressed through a standing ovation.

The Agreement on Diversity is mostly about diversity representation in relation to gender, age and ethnicity. However, it also speaks about respect of diversity, reflecting the membership, making commitment and equal worth, and developing the democracy. Yet, there are no binding commitments, no proportionality numbers and measures, and no tools or specification on how to achieve diversity representation.

Now 1.5 year after the congress decision 3F is struggling with making the agreement a reality<sup>iv</sup>. It is a difficult and extensive process where national leaders, committees, experts and local branches first have to find out and agree on what should be done and then how to do it. The process is also complicated by leaders having many other tasks and then giving lower priority to the implementation of the agreement; and because the structure in 3F gives the local branches a high degree of independence which results in many different interpretations and implementations of the agreement.

### **Making a Diversity Democracy in 3F**

Some branches have already worked with the agreement, and of these some have done this in direct continuation of their earlier work with gender equality and membership participation. It is, however, difficult to get an overview of what has already been done. A few branches have been chosen as case-branches. Here diversity workshops have been held and the branch boards have got ideas for how to change rules and practices. But according to Claus Jørgensen, the national leader in charge of GE & DD, decisive progress is not yet made. The ‘Gender Equality & Diversity Office’ has made a leaflet, with an introduction and recommendation from Claus Jørgensen, about diversity and trade unions in the workplace; this leaflet is intended for shop stewards/employee representatives. Also a ‘driving license’ to diversity has been introduced. Moreover, in the union policy programme 2010-2013 gender equality and the inclusion and respect for diversity are mainstreamed into most parts e.g. values, democracy, in agreements, in membership service. Gender equality and integration of ethnic minorities also have a separate part in the policy programme; in addition it is possible for all members to make networks. Finally, during the spring 2012 the gender equality and diversity committee is going to discuss the how to implement the agreement build on local experiences.<sup>v</sup>

Besides the agreement on diversity, 3F is working with two other strategies decided at the congress in 2010: the development of the organisation and the democracy and renewal of the organizing strategy. These are not directly linked to the Agreement on Diversity, yet, both are important if 3F should develop a real diversity democracy. According to Jane Korczak diversity is the pivot of the local democracy because the agreement requires that all branches ask themselves: ‘Have we included the women? Have we included the ethnic minorities? Have we included the young people? Have we included all service groups? Have we included the geography?’

Jane Korczak is in charge of the development of the organization and the democracy. She has visited most local branches to create a debate about the trade union in the future and get proposal to make the democracy structures better. It has been a difficult ‘event’ partly because the organization is used to negotiate not to debate. She would like a broader democracy discussion and committees which could discuss and rethink the TU-democracy and then come with recommendations to the next congress. And she asks the questions, ‘Is it so important to be in the executive committee? Is it really where things happen? Or should we rather make another food chain? I would rather have strong policy committees which I could have as sparring-partners and who would have influence on proposals and who could recommend proposals for the executive committee, and take part in the discussions in the executive committee’.

On the other hand she states that until now,

‘...we do what we always have done (...) we have not been thinking out of the box; we have some rules and a framework we have to follow (...); we need to think how can we invite to cooperation (...) but we end up with the same, the general meeting (...) the federation has failed a little, we have focused on the legal field, that this was ok (...) but what they (the branches) else do we have not cared about because they have sovereignty. We have not offered workshops or training in how to develop the democracy on their own terms and conditions...’.

3F is loosing members and these are mainly among the young people, women and ethnic minorities in private service (cleaning, hotel staff, waiters and cooks); also the amount of factory worker members are decreasing; and in percentage more women than men. 3F has recently appointed a committee which will be in charge of renewing and intensifying the organizing work. Claus Jørgensen, who comes from the carpenters and builders trade union that amalgamated with 3F in 2010, brings with him a lot of knowledge about how this could be done. He suggests that women organize women, that you can speak the language of those you are going to organize and preferable that you work within the trade. He emphasizes that it is important to listen to the workers and then together with them find solutions to their problems. And then as the last step speak about membership. ‘Then community is something you feel, something you are a part of, not only something you are told about’. In this approach diversity is included and practices are much more participative. Whether this will be the way, it is done in 3F in the future, is still to be decided, but in a Copenhagen branch the private service group has tried this approach with some success. Yet, it is important first of all to identify why 3F is loosing members. There is some knowledge about this already: it is about a decrease in jobs in organized sectors, more migration and better education, but it might also have to do with how the trade union works and communicates. Another explanation is when families have to save money women’s trade union membership is cut out.

### **Openings, challenges and actions**

Both leaders agree that age is a concern of most trade union leaders, and this keeps the debate going.

‘Everyone can see that we have a problem with age (...) from this perspective leaders are interested in taking the discussion; but it is (...) difficult to get them to take the broader discussion’. The local leaders feel that they have already done a lot in regard to ethnic minorities ‘... but this whole idea that we might have to start in another way, it is absent’. (Jane Korczak).

Also Claus Jørgensen is concerned about the representation and participation of ethnic minorities ‘We have a challenge in relation to the distribution of power in relation to gender, age and ethnicity, and then we have a further challenge in relation to our ethnic members. We are really bad at making contact with them, here I speak of those who are already members not the unorganized, we are not good at including them in our work - and to open up. Some will experience that the new initiatives we have to make in order to create room and possibilities for members with another ethnic background than Danish, are even bigger than if it is ‘only’ women or ‘only’ young people. (...)’ He believes it is after all easier for the trade union to cope with the women and the young people, ‘...ethnic minorities will ask questions that are strange (...) [but] women and young people will be fast to decode what is going on and they can take part in the ongoing work without any changes made to this’.

On the other hand some of the branches have experienced that employing staff with an ethnic minority background has made a difference; and in others they have made networks and mentor schemes for ethnic minority leaders.

Jane Korczak believes that some of the men will become change agents, although mostly the young, 'And in the longer run we will experience that the TIB men will make their mark (...) because they are a different type of men (...) and more seeking compromises'.

Claus Jørgensen, who himself comes from TIB, disagrees partly to this:

'There is a difference between the younger and the older male leaders when it comes to gender equality policies, but not when it comes to power and leadership then they are the same; maybe the younger leaders are even more 'hard as nails' because it is about their career (...) I can reflect myself in this, I am part of this, too. And I can see if we deal the cards again, then I will lose the overview and my own plans on how to get where I want to (...) this alone makes many not support (changes)'

Claus Jørgensen is really worried about what will happen when the FR-agreement is phased out, and he believes that if any changes should happen '...women, ethnic minorities and young people have to form a united front against all this'. He is now in favour of quotas and targeted training of women,

'One way could be to decide some sort of quotas (...) this is what I think will work, I can't see that anything else will give the same effect (...)The other thing one could do (...) is to make some very targeted training of women who would like to take part in the branch board and in the congress – I don't think we can get it further than that (...) so this composition where secured, then this voice would be stronger (...) We have made many really good things about this (...) but these have not been targeted, it has not had the effect to learn how to think tactically; to learn exactly when to go for it; to know that at the coming meeting we are going to decide who will be the delegated for the congress, and then to stand for it, to prepare it: I do it with my own words, I do it decently, but I do it (...) there is a lot of it (LLH: the power play), it is not because you have to copy it, but you have to understand it, to look through it, to know when to act'.

Claus Jørgensen points at the fact that the present membership power base, factory work, is decreasing, and that this alone will create openings for change. Also a less gender segregated labour market will force changes in 3F. Jane Korczak points at two experiences which she identifies as openings and ways forward: the good experiences with direct membership contact during the parliament election campaign in the autumn 2011 and the successful cooperation about gender inequality matters between trade unions, NGO's, researchers and other gender equality agents mainly in the form of networks in which 3F has taken the initiative and delivered the service. As Jane Korczak says,

'We don't have to deliver all the solutions – we can just deliver the locations – and then all the solutions come automatically'.

### **Power, identity and diversity in 3F**

Both leaders make it clear that 3F is a masculine organization and that gender equality is a contested policy field.

'The (GE) problem is very much the same; I have personally experienced how much it has meant that I could let go of the discussions, how worn out I was, because it is sensitive; it is made personal

(...) it is a conflict-ridden agenda, because despite gender training people feel tremendously challenged by the discussion if it is about gender (...) the men experience that they are personally attacked (...); it is very difficult to reach a general level in the discussion (...) but I don't know for sure why there are so much resistance' (Jane Korczak, formally in charge of the gender equality and diversity policy agenda)

'... but we have to speak it out loud: this about male power, we have male power in 3F, 3F is a masculine organization, but you will not get any men to admit to this, they will use all other types of explanations' (Claus Jørgensen, now in charge of the gender equality and diversity policy agenda)

But both leaders also stress how power in many forms influence on the democracy and therefore also on women's, ethnic minorities' and the young peoples' access to leadership.

'But if we should cut things short then it is about power (...) none give up power and privileges freely and if you are waiting to get into power as a man and then you have to share that with women, the young people and the ethnics, so if you can leave them out – I don't think this is intentional (...) then you are not interested in any changes' (CJ)

'But it is all like in the surface; the 'the stock cube in the soup' is power – we have to manage it – (...) we cannot make power go away, but maybe we can find a way to bypass it – we can't wait for a revelation (...) When I speak about this (...) most leaders agree on the general level, but when I make it concrete they back; they are good representatives of our union, they are reliable and decent...' (CJ)

As a response to my comment about how white working class men lose power in the masculine hierarchy and losing identity when they have to give up leadership, he says first – with a laugh. 'It (power and leadership) means more to men than to all other - which then are women', the last part laughing. And secondly he tells a short story, 'We have (...) a new member in the executive committee (...) I have never seen anyone shine like he did, he was so happy, so proud that it has been able for him in the last part of his career to get into the executive committee (...) If we said to him: you are not going to come next time because we need to have a woman instead of you, I think he would die' (CJ)

Jane Korczak discusses another problem with power and leadership, 'I think I can identify a development which will be damaging for the trade union; that we have two parallel systems; the one is moving on focusing very much on the formal hierarchy (...) I go through the system, I can read the game, I am an organization nerd; this is typically alpha-males. And then we have another type of men, and the women, who choose another way, closer to the membership and who say that what is meaningful and which gives value to us (...) is to be close to the workplaces, close to the members, close to the branches; in any case do we not think that the executive committee or going to Copenhagen is sufficiently interesting (...) And I think, it would be sad if we end up with an executive committee only with alpha-males because the others do something they think are more fun, because it (the EC) is not meaningful enough, does not give enough yield both for them as humans and in relation to their union policy agenda' (JK)

## **Case II: Strategies of solidarity and interest representation in the Danish labour market**

I have chosen three different organisational settings to discuss the Danish labour movement's solidarity strategies to migrant and ethnic minority workers: LO (The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions), FOA (Trade & Labour), and 3F (United Federation of Danish Workers). The LO is the national confederation of trade unions for unskilled and skilled workers. The LO-members are the individual trade unions so the LO neither has direct contact with the domestic workers nor are they involved directly in the bargaining of pay and working conditions. Nevertheless, the LO is indirectly involved as they represent the labour movement in tripartite agreements and arrangements like boards, think-tanks, commissions and committees at national, regional and local levels. Furthermore, they are involved in general policy-making, media campaigning and the development of new methods and tools e.g. organising strategies. FOA is the trade union for unskilled or low-skilled public employees working as for example cleaners, home-helpers, nursing assistants, assistants in day-care facilities for children, and caretakers. The 3F is the trade union for unskilled and low-skilled workers mainly in the private sector. They organise among others industrial workers, cleaners, gardeners, maids, waiters, kitchen-staff, painters, lorry and taxi drivers, and railway workers. I have interviewed one female and one male appointed officer at the LO, one senior male leader from FOA's national office, and two female elected officers from a local 3F branch.<sup>vi</sup>

### **Path dependency & breaks in interest representation**

The trade union officers and leaders interviewed are following the path of the established labour market model both in present practice and in ideas for future strategies. The development of an informal labour market is not accepted but is fought through different measures: if the problem is that there is no real employer to bargain with then they have to find ways to make real employers; if employers are not following regulations then new regulations have to make it more difficult to escape sentences. Equally, trade unions rather use resources on organising than work to secure rights and pay through regulation by law. Nevertheless, the trade union officers and leaders also have different approaches. At the LO they most closely follow the framework of the Danish labour market model: they discuss different ways to 'construct' employers and stress both the strengthening of organising mainly in the traditional ways *and* the importance of international cooperation and agreements. At the same time they also suggest that it would be worth considering whether regulation by law could solve some of the problems. The approach, the trade union leaders and officers in FOA and the 3F branch take, is very similar. The interest in cooperation with different forms of ethnic minority networks, churches and NGO's, which FOA already does and the 3F-branch plans to do, might not be a purely new idea, but all the same it points to the strengthening of new ways of organising, interest representation and cooperation. . The FOA leader says,

'It has placed us in the middle of a network ... in which you know the au-pair field, and it means that we continuously get notifications about what the terms are like, and we intervene in cases too ... in reality we are now in a situation where we try to bring some trial cases to court to be able to document that it isn't possible to defend the au-pairs' conditions '.

Nevertheless, there are also some differences between the two unions. The most important are that FOA makes it possible for the au-pairs to become trade union members and that FOA takes care of the au-pairs' problems despite the fact that they do not have a working contract. On the other hand, the officers in the 3F-branch are very much aware about gendered aspects of the problems both on

the labour market and in the labour movement and they point at identity-based forms of organising and representation as important future strategies.

‘Because then they could speak from their own heart. They can see that they are not alone. Many times ‘the ethnics’ come one maybe two. And then we sit, a hundred persons, and they are only one or two, and God knows how they must feel alone’ (Leader A 3F).

Hereby both trade unions break with previous strategies.

### **Social injustice and understandings of solidarity**

Trade union solidarity strategies are becoming more inclusive to diversity both in regard to seat and voice: it is not only about membership it is also about securing the influence of all workers. The officers’ and leaders’ efforts are carried both by a strong wish to fight the injustice that the ‘new’ workers meet *and* by an acknowledgement of the need to organise and represent the interest of all workers if trade unions should stay in power in the Danish labour market and a new underclass of workers should be resisted. All also give solidarity as the grounds for their commitment to the case; moreover, the two female officers at the local 3F branch express a strong feeling of empathy with the women and a commitment to the common situation of being a woman.

‘But you know it is also about something else. We women can speak...we speak together in a different way... we have a lot of things in common despite where we come from. Most of us experience being mothers. We have that in common and will have the rest of our lives. And it means a lot if you are going out and trying to motivate them to become members in this trade union ...’ (Leader B)

Especially at the LO they are aware that to solve the problems international solidarity practices are needed.

### **Barriers to solidarity and interest representation**

Nevertheless, it is regarded as difficult to organise the cleaners because they work in private homes or in small companies not known to the trade unions. The male officer in LO says:

‘It is clear that, like all other workplaces, the bigger they are, the more surveillance and control. But it is more difficult at the small hotel where a couple of girls run around - not many come looking for them. It is a little like these Polish girls, they do private cleaning, there you don’t have a chance, it will ... always be poorly organised because the union representative or the local branch leaders will not know that somebody works in that home... But of course you have to work for a better coverage, and make some arrangements for them - where they can come and get information and to know how they can get support’.

However, the two female leaders in 3F point at that both on the labour market and in the labour movement cleaning are placed in the lower end of the job hierarchy and *made* invisible as a result of gender and ethnic power relations:

‘...It is an all women-area. And there is no one else than women who are involved ... and it has a low priority, because it is only ‘the ethnics’, and it is not something which covers the whole country, it is only in the capital area and in the big cities. And this women can deal with. And it is only cleaning, and that is something with a bad pay, so this is a woman’s job’ (Leader A).

In general, the interviewees pointed to the Danish immigration regime as causing a lot of problems for global workers both those living in Denmark permanently *and* those travelling from either the East or the South to work on a temporary basis; these problems and the immigration regime as such influence negatively on trade union membership and activism, too (see also Moore et al 2010).

### **Interest based solidarities?**

The trade union leaders draw on different understandings of solidarity. Yet, all agree on solidarity as interest representation among all workers. In addition, the two women leaders in 3F express a solidarity that builds on affections and common experiences as women. None of the leaders see diversity as in opposition to solidarity, but they differ from each other in if and how this should have consequences for trade union structures and cultures. The leader in FOA and the two leaders in 3F discuss changes that would lead towards a solidarity based on 'unity in diversity': in 3F they want to renew democracy structures so that self-organisation based on identity and not only on area of work would be possible; in FOA they work together with migrant networks and they have offered the au-pairs to build up their own network (group) within the union. However, here one barrier becomes visible, because the au-pairs are not interested in taking part in trade union activism, one obvious explanation is that they regard their job as transitional, and therefore – and maybe also of other reasons – find migrant networks more attractive.<sup>vii</sup> In general getting members to be active in TU democracy and to attend meetings are difficult. Some explanations point at members being too busy and preferring other communities. I believe that just as important if not more is the tension between trade unions being strong institutions in the labour market, with hierarchical organisations, mainly participation through election, focusing on service and 'insurance' *and* on the other hand expect membership participation when called for by the union. Another important aspect is gendered and ethnic power relations within the labour movement and at the labour market which only the three female leaders and in particular the two from 3F bring into the discussion. In 3F some branches are changing ways of participation and could then open for more 'reflective' solidarity practices which could also better use the experiences of members in policy making. This is also an issue in regard to migrant workers who are represented in general policy making, but when it comes to membership only those with a working contract are included (with the exception of au-pairs in FOA). The question is how the labour movement can make good policies on their working and living conditions if they do not have their own seat and voice.

Working-class is not spoken about directly as the foundation for solidarity although indirectly as doing something for the 'weak'. Some of the leaders speak about the 'weak' in a way that establishes a gap between themselves and migrant workers, and probably also between 'ordinary/normal' members and migrant workers. In general interest representation is a 'we' but beneath/in that we also have a 'us' = the privileged and a 'them' = the weak. Partly in contrast, the two female leaders speak about 'us' = the common situation as women. The struggle against social injustice at the labour market is important for all leaders. What social justice is, is not expressed directly, but could be linked to equal pay and rights. The strategies already in power and those planned or wished for do neither include reflections on the ideological base nor a systematic rethinking of social justice in the labour market in globalization. The leaders are much more concerned with how to fight the consequences of neo-liberal globalized capitalism including restraining the rising exploitation of (new) workers and the challenges to the strong Danish labour model in practise than countermoves based on ideology or 'reimagining'. A rethinking should also include issues of framing. The LO and the individual unions work together with other national and international trade unions, confederations and in international organs, however issues of misframing are still unsolved: How to represent transitional workers? How to get influence on new interest agendas? How to fight injustice when decisions are made outside representation and bargaining

structures? How to coordinate collective action across national borders? How to get trade unions and other workers' organisations to work together despite cultural differences and national embeddedness?

## Conclusions

Danish trade unions aim at including all workers, yet, parity in participation is yet to come! Making the words of Claus Jørgensen mine, 'I wish that we could discover all the possibilities of diversity instead of all the hassle, but right now we are in a different place'.

3F is working hard to transform practices and to make diversity representation. The work is still on-going and I hope to be able to enter into cooperation with them on the development of a trade union diversity democracy.

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<sup>i</sup> My focus here, as in the Ph.D., was on the LO. The UNISON model to gender equality was mainly used to reflect the Danish strategy and to learn from.

<sup>ii</sup> The clever reader might already have guessed that my inspiration to the 'love-perspective' comes from Simone de Beauvoir. I draw in particular on the re-readings by Toril Moi (2005) and Lillian Munk Rösing (2005). The basis of my re-reading is first that as human-beings we are all thrown into one of two genders – woman or man; secondly, that this does not automatically lead to a specific edition of woman or man (nor to heterosexuality), instead the body is a situation with specific arrangements and potentials which meets cultural and historical conditions and possibilities, that all are contributing to the construction of our identity/identities; thirdly, that herewith we get the knowledge that there are always two – or more - experiences; fourthly, that 'the other' is neither my reflection nor my lost half nor a mystery; and finally, that gender is only one among many life experiences. For an elaboration of my critique of post-structuralism and my re-reading of Beauvoir, Moi and Rösing please see Hansen 2010a.

<sup>iii</sup> The challenges build on research in diversity management, gender mainstreaming and intersectionality (e.g. Bacchi & Eveline, Crenshaw, Hagedorn-Rasmussen & Kemp, Kirton & Greene, McBride et al, Squires, Yuval-Davies), research in UNISON (Hansen 2004a) and ver.di (Kirsch in Ledwith & Hansen forthcoming), and in mine and Scheuer's research in fair representation and gender equality in 3F (Hansen 2007, Hansen 2008, Hansen & Scheuer 2006)

<sup>iv</sup> Paper uploaded Medio Feb.2012

<sup>v</sup> I am reporting from on-going research in which the data production has just started; this is also part of the reason for the difficulties in getting an overview.

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<sup>vi</sup> In the following I focus on what the leaders say about solidarity, interest representation and inclusive democracy and which strategies for the future they suggest – and how they speak about it. In the analysis as such I also include reports, articles and policy papers (see Hansen 2010)

<sup>vii</sup> In that way they act very much alike many of the younger not migrant members in FOA who are working within the area either before taking an education or during that.